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Primitive Secret Societies. A Study in Early Politics and Religion. By HUTTON WEBSTER, Ph.D. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908. 8°, 227 pp.

This is probably the best general work on the subject that has yet appeared, at least in English. It is not, of course, exhaustive, being intended apparently rather as a text book for the beginner in Anthropology, or a convenient summary of our present knowledge of this subject, than as a treatise for the research student. Viewed in this way it fills a need which instructors in anthropology must feel at the present time, and fills it well. This might have been anticipated, since, as we are informed, it has "enjoyed the advantage of a preliminary examination by Professor W. Z. Ripley and Professor T. N. Carver," of Harvard University, where in its original form it was presented as a thesis for the doctorate in Political Science, while the manuscript has been read by Professors Toy and Moore. It bears witness to a great deal of painstaking research and compilation on the part of its author, as is well attested by the abundant footnotes. The material is grouped into eleven chapters treating of The Men's House, The Puberty Institution, The Secret Rites, The Training of the Novice, The Power of the Elders, Development of Tribal Societies, Functions of Tribal Societies, Decline of Tribal Societies, The Clan Ceremonies, Magical Fraternities, and Diffusion of Initiation Ceremonies.

In his preface Dr Webster states that he started with no preconceived notions on the subject, but "endeavored to shape his theories in accordance with his facts, and in many instances by abstaining from generalization, to let his facts carry their own significance to the reader's mind." This is, of course, the correct scientific position, and there is every evidence of Dr Webster's perfect sincerity in making the statement.

While Dr Webster may himself have been free from preconceptions, however, it is to be regretted, though it was perhaps inevitable, that he has not escaped those in the minds of many of his authorities. The following remarks should, therefore, not be understood as applying to the work before us so much as to those authorities from which the "preconceptions" just referred to have been drawn. I have just spoken of "preconceptions," but I should rather have said preconception. It is a preconception which at the present day affects not only students of anthropological literature, but even a number of field workers, dominates their thought, governs their theories, and tends to bias even records of plain facts. To distinguish it from the legitimate hypothesis of evolution with which it has grown up I would suggest the term "evolutionism." Ostensibly it stands for an honest endeavor to reconstruct the past history of

man, man's institutions, customs, organization, and religion, but practically it is governed by a vicious principle destructive of all results truly scientific. That modern civilization has evolved or developed from a simpler or "more primitive" condition is true enough, and it is also true that this primitive condition is to a degree reflected in the present state of savage and semi-savage races. The vicious principle is involved in this, that students insist on their ability to pick out from these primitive races and their customs those which are more and those which are less "primitive," to state that certain tribes are at the very bottom, that certain others have passed through just that state and are now slightly beyond it, that certain others having passed through those two states are slightly beyond the second, and so on; in short, contemporary tribes are made to do duty as representatives of so many successive states of the whole human race. Even this we might condone, however, were the selection of tribes and customs made after a careful survey of the entire field and a more thorough attempt to eliminate what is special and transitory in any one area. Unfortunately this has not been done in the great majority of cases. Instead of selecting characteristics as primitive which are general, being common to all or to a large proportion of the savage tribes, customs which are most peculiar and individual are selected, resemblances are found in other sections, and those resemblances are dubbed "survivals," the primitive condition supposedly being represented by the tribes which preserve this custom in fullest vigor. The selection of primitive customs is also apt to be governed by an assumption that those which are strangest and most repulsive to white races are *per se* the most primitive, while all others are later, and where we do not find them they have died out. Thus in certain parts of the world tribes are found to consist of divisions each known by the name of some species of animal or plant to which it considers itself to bear peculiar relations, other tribes show something similar but not so pronounced, while civilized races do not possess such an institution; *ergo* all primitive men consisted of such divisions, and the tribes which show this form of organization in its perfection are the most primitive, while those containing customs at all resembling it present "survivals" of this "primitive" condition. In the same way there have been attempts to show that cannibalism, incest, promiscuity, marriage by capture, the wearing of labrets, head deformation, etc., were characteristic of "primitive" man, and where each of these is best developed we have "primitive" conditions, where it is poorly developed "survivals," and where it is wanting it has died out. To a votary of evolutionism it seems impossible to suggest that the poorly developed custom may be in

its infancy and the well-developed one peculiar to a few peoples and limited both as to time and area, or to suggest that both may be sporadic and that the poorly developed may never, even if uninfluenced by civilization, pass beyond its present status.

A thread of this preconception may be found running from chapter to chapter through the work before us. As an instance of the kind may be mentioned a statement on page 147 to the effect that "among the Indian tribes of the Northwest the clan organization, while still retained, is in process of decay," and farther on "the northern [coast] tribes continue to reckon descent on the maternal side; the southern tribes have now established paternal descent." It is hard to understand why these should be made in face of the exactly contrary conclusion to which nearly all students intimately acquainted with the north Pacific coast tribes have arrived, and which appear to be contradicted by what Dr Webster himself says on the page following. On page 147 we also read that "among the tribes of the Southwest . . . the totemic clans have entirely broken down, and in their place have arisen the numerous fraternities found, for example, among the Zuni and Hopi Indians." Now the truth of the matter is that except for the influence of white men the Pueblo clans were never stronger. What has taken place is the diffusion of the old clan rituals among other clans than those which originally had exclusive control over them. These are minor defects in Dr Webster's work, however, due to the influences which I have just inveighed against, and at the present time it is hardly more probable for a young student to avoid them than for the average child to escape the measles. A few years of field work will change his views along this line quite materially.

JOHN R. SWANTON.

The Mother of California. Being an Historical Sketch of the Little Known Land of Baja California from the Days of Cortez to the Present Time, Depicting the Ancient Missions Therein Established, the Mines There Found, and the Physical, Social and Political Aspects of the Country; Together with an Extensive Bibliography Relative to the same. By ARTHUR WALBRIDGE NORTH. With an Introduction by Cyrus C. Adams, of the American Geographical Society. San Francisco and New York: Paul Elder & Co. [1908]. 12°, xi, 169 pp., 32 pl., map. (\$2.00.)

The author of this interesting book is not unknown to the readers of this journal, for he has already given them the results of some of the observations made during his protracted stay in the little-known land of Lower California.

Although lying at our very doors, it is safe to say that before the ap-